

Qualities of ATSU DPT Graduates Identified as Contributing Factors to Leadership in the Physical Therapy Profession

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BACKGROUND

Leadership is an important feature of all professions. A leader can elevate others to their best selves and meet a unified vision^{1, 7, 20}.

Leadership is one of eight supporting elements contributing to a culture of excellence in the profession of physical therapy^{2,4,10}. There is an expansive bank of literature evaluating what makes a leader, however, little research has been conducted exploring what experiences people bring to physical therapy graduate programs that identify them as future leaders in their careers.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between leadership experiences prior to matriculation and graduates identified as leaders by peers and faculty at the A.T. Still University DPT program.

METHODS

This was a qualitative study using individual interviews.



Subject Selection

Class of 2020 alumni and faculty asked to identify leaders via online form
8 faculty and 21 alumni responded
Responses analyzed, top 4 men and women selected to be interviewed



Interviews and Transcripts

Semi-structured 30–40-minute interviews performed over zoom utilizing an interview guide
Transcripts verified



Coding and Analysis

Coding completed in NVivo 11 coding analysis software
Trustworthiness and validity ensured through auditing and triangulation of data.
Following analysis, six themes identified

Interview Template Available Here:

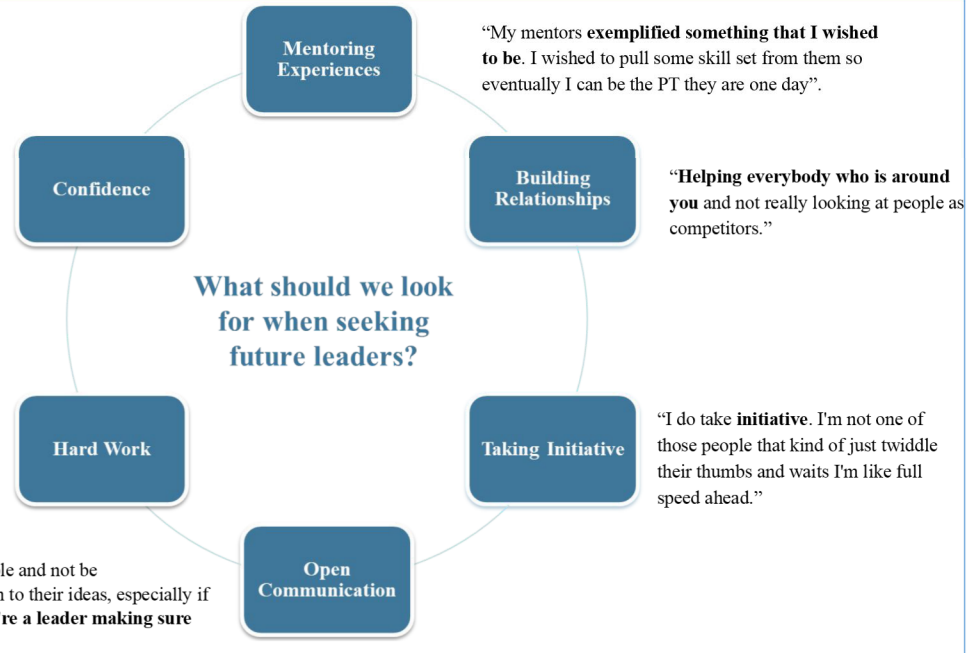


RESULTS

“If you as a **PT student talks to another interdisciplinary student**, like a PA student or a DO student and you teach them what PT is, **that builds a lot of confidence, a lot of leadership skills.**”

“**Don't just settle with being good enough, always try to get better at something that you're doing**...if you're wanting to be better, you want to be a leader, trying to do more than doing what you know, even if it's hard.”

“Being able to talk to people and not be condescending or not listen to their ideas, especially if you're in a group or **if you're a leader making sure all voices are heard.**”



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ATSU admission team should examine applications for prior experiences and personal characteristics that demonstrate:

- Perseverance and dedication** Questions focused on a challenge or situation that required diligence in order to complete a task
- Ability to seek a strong connection to a professional mentor** Questions focused on students seeking mentorship and gaining valuable insights from that experience.
- Skill with interprofessional collaboration** Questions that focus on effective communication to overcome adversity or work with a team
- Self-motivation** Questions that identify situations in which students were proactive
- Ability to listen and express themselves** Questions about interprofessional collaboration and teamwork, effective communication and the ability to build community
- Capability of being assertive in situations that require a strong leader** Questions focused on opportunities that an applicant participated in that helped to increase their confidence in the area of focus

